



TDS STRATEGY MEMO:

**TO REGAIN THE SUPPORT OF
“CULTURALLY TRADITIONAL BUT NOT EXTREMIST”
WORKING CLASS VOTERS DEMOCRATS NEED
TO UNDERSTAND THE COMPELLING POLITICAL NARRATIVE
THAT LEADS THEM TO VOTE FOR THE GOP.**

BY

ANDREW LEVISON



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Summary

1. *As the 2022 elections approach, a critical question for Democratic strategists is why a significant group of working class voters choose to support Republican extremists even though they themselves are more accurately described as “cultural traditionalists” rather than extremists. In opinion surveys and focus groups this group of white (and now also increasingly Latino) working class voters make clear that they do not actually believe MAGA/Q-Anon/Tucker Carlson conspiracy theories or view all Democrats as literal “enemies” but they nonetheless vote for extremist candidates who assert these views on election day.*
2. *A major reason for this is that working class voters do not make their political choices primarily based on examining specific issues and policies. They evaluate candidates based on their broader outlook and philosophy – a perspective that the candidates frequently present as a basic “story” or “narrative” about America.*
3. *The basic extremist narrative is actually undergirded by three profoundly important subsidiary narratives that are nested within the larger narrative and which long pre-date the modern MAGA ideology. These three linked sub-narratives are not inherently extremist. They express a genuine and understandable frustration and sense of abandonment by the Democratic Party.*
4. *Democratic candidates can identify with these narratives and seek ways to address the legitimate concerns that are a deeply felt part of the working class experience in modern America without endorsing the extremist narrative that has incorporated and exploited them with such marked success.*

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By ANDREW LEVISON

As the 2022 elections approach, a critical question for Democratic strategists is why a significant group of working class voters choose to support Republican extremists even though they themselves are more accurately described as “cultural traditionalists” rather than extremists.¹

In opinion surveys and focus groups this group of white (and now also increasingly Latino) working class voters make clear that they do not actually believe MAGA/Q-Anon/Tucker Carlson conspiracy theories or view all Democrats as literal “enemies” but they nonetheless vote for extremist candidates who assert these views on election day.

For the most part the current intra-Democratic debate about how to reach these voters focuses on issues. Can these voters be swayed by even more ambitious Democratic economic proposals or by more moderate stances on cultural issues? Can Democratic candidates win their support by exclusively focusing on “kitchen table issues” or by aggressively challenging extremist accusations.

It is important to recognize, however, that working class voters who do not pay careful attention to politics do not make their political choices primarily based on examining specific issues and policies. They evaluate candidates based on their broader outlook and philosophy – a perspective that the candidates frequently present as a basic “story” or “narrative” about America.

These basic narratives play a major role in political thought. Voters’ basic understanding of “what’s gone wrong” and “why things are the way they are today” act as a conceptual framework within which specific issues and specific candidates are considered.

The Role of Political Narratives in Democratic Strategy

As one political columnist noted:

Back when I was at university, the only people who ever used the word ‘narrative’ were literature students with an interest in critical theory. Everyone else made do with ‘story’

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¹For an extended profile of culturally traditional white workers, see https://thedemocraticstrategist.org/_memos/tds_SM_levison_culturally_traditional_WWC_voters_v2.pdf

and 'plot'. Since then, the n-word has been on a long journey towards the spotlight – especially the political spotlight. Everybody in politics now seems to talk about narratives all the time; even political spin-doctors describe their job as being 'to craft narratives'.²

Despite this, however, most of the discussion about political narratives is painfully superficial. There are only a few serious studies in political science and sociology journals regarding the role they play in American politics.³

One of the most thoughtful analyses of the role that narratives play specifically in Democratic political strategy, however, appears in Dr. Drew Westen's influential book *The Political Brain*. As Westen noted:

Our minds naturally search for stories with a particular kind of structure... a coherent story has an initial state or setting ("once upon a time") protagonists and antagonists, a problem, obstacles, often a clash between the protagonists trying to solve the problem and those who stand in their way and a denouement in which the problem is ultimately resolved.

He continues:

Any compelling political narrative must have the following elements

It should have protagonists and antagonists

It should be clear and coherent requiring few leaps of inference or imagination

It should have a clear moral

It should be moving

It should have central elements that are readily visualized

It should be rich in metaphor so that it is emotionally evocative

It should take elements of the opposition's story including its metaphors and recast them as its own.

Although *The Political Brain* was published in 2007, the description above very accurately describes the narrative strategy that Donald Trump employed in his 2016 campaign. The reality is that Trump offered absolutely no specific plans regarding any issue or in any area of policy. His campaign was entirely based a loosely connected series of narratives that he cobbled together in different ways during his various campaign appearances.

²<https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v33/n04/john-lanchester/short-cuts>

³See, for example,

Annual Review of Political Science 1998 <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev.polisci.1.1.315>

American Journal of Cultural Sociology <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41290-017-0037-7>

One significant attempt to relate political narratives to broader areas in the social sciences was provided by Jonathan Haidt and his coauthors who attempted to relate political narratives to both Haidt's quite influential Moral Foundations Theory and also to what is known in psychology as the "big five" taxonomy of personality types.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233174706_Above_and_Below_Left-Right_Ideological_Narratives_and_Moral_Foundations

The wave of extremist candidates who have followed Trump this year do not try to replicate his unique style and personality. Rather, they present a rather generic version of the extremist narrative while adding minor variations in the specific issues and conflicts that they emphasize.

Basically, the extremist wing of the GOP today presents a narrative that emphatically and categorically depicts America as engaged in a literal “war” between liberals and decent Americans. In Pat Buchanan and Newt Gingrich’s early formulations, it is “*a war for the soul of America*,” and “*a cultural civil war*.”

The first wave of the extremist offensive in the “war against liberals” was led by Fox News and talk radio hosts like Rush Limbaugh. The second wave was coordinated by George W. Bush’s campaign strategist Karl Rove. After Barack Obama was elected in 2008, Glen Beck and the Tea Party candidates in 2012 asserted that Obama was literally a terrorist and communist whose health care insurance plan was quite literally the first step in a detailed plan to create socialist concentration camps across America.

The enduring thread in this extremist narrative is the idea that liberals and Democrats are not merely stupid, deluded or misguided—as Ronald Reagan, for example, perceived them—but are consciously and intentionally evil. They are very literally “enemies” who must be crushed.

The current GOP primaries vividly illustrate the “race to the bottom” as new candidates now compete for support by developing more and more lurid accusations to gain attention and produce a range of rhetorical “dog whistles” to indicate their support for undermining Democratic institutions, if necessary, by violent vigilante action.

The critical question for Democratic strategists, however, is why do working class voters who are cultural traditionalists vote for these candidates if they do not actually believe the extremist narrative that they offer? In what way does the extremist narrative appeal to them?

*The answer is that the basic extremist narrative is actually undergirded by three profoundly important subsidiary narratives that are nested within the larger narrative and which long pre-date the modern MAGA ideology. The central fact is that **these subsidiary narratives are not inherently extremist** and many working class people deeply identify with them while not accepting extremist views.*

The three sub-narratives are:

1. The past era of “good times” when society was fair.
2. The breakdown of the “Fair Deal” beginning in the 1970’s.
3. The growth of “chaos” and the loss of order.

The first subsidiary narrative describes an era of “*good times*” that existed in the past. In the northern industrial cities older working class citizens today can remember their parents describing the “*time when things were good*” in the post war period before 1970 and many younger people have absorbed the story from them at second hand.

The core of this narrative describes the “good jobs” that existed back then – factory jobs that not only provided a decent salary that allowed a man to support a family but also job security, vacation and retirement benefits and a set of standards about the conditions of work that were all provided under the union contract.

Workers perceived this post-war “deal” as fundamentally “fair.” Successful businessmen, professionals and wealthy people were seen as basically deserving the greater wealth and income that they received as part of a “deal” that also provided a decent life for a working class person who was willing to work hard and “play by the rules”.

In small town and rural areas this vision of a past era of “good times” was deeply entwined with the nostalgic memory of small town and rural life itself – of the profound sense of close, neighborly community life and shared social experience – from walking to church on Sunday to picnics on the town square and hunting and fishing on weekends only a short distance from the edge of town.

For African-Americans in the South, of course, this idyllic picture was far from the reality. It was not only the basic reality of segregation and disenfranchisement that made small town southern life profoundly oppressive but the grotesque reality that any white man or woman could falsely accuse a Black person of virtually any offense and be entirely sure that the person would be arrested and convicted by an all-white jury.

But for many urban progressives, this reality was extended to suggest that any conception of small town life as positive or appealing was simply an illusion. A Washington Post article about the 1960’s TV show “The Andy Griffith Show” dramatically expressed this view.

The Andy Griffith show, starring Griffith as the good-natured sheriff and Ron Howard as his adorable young son, was one of the most-watched shows from its debut in 1960 until it went off the air in 1968... while Mayberry was not real, the city of Mount Airy, N.C., now claims to be the prototype on which it was based. [The city now promotes] the Andy Griffith Museum and a vintage police car and other replica hot spots from the series, all packed with tourists.

[TV producer Ted] Koppel said in an interview that “People looking back seem to confuse the program with what reality was like in those days, wishing that we could only restore some of the good feelings, some of the kindness, some of the decency. But what they’re really reflecting on is not what was going on in a particular North Carolina community. What they’re reflecting is what was going on in the creative minds of a bunch of script-writers out in Hollywood...to the extent that people go to Disneyland and confuse Disneyland with reality, they need to be reminded of the fact that it’s a place that was created to sell tickets to a lot of rides and to make money. ...There’s nothing evil about that. But people shouldn’t be hurt if somebody reminds them that they’re not dealing with reality.”⁴

But for many working class Americans who grew up in small towns the positive elements of small town life were profoundly and emphatically real and the recollection of them evoked a vivid memory of “*the good old days*” back when “*neighbors were neighbors*” and people “*took care of each other.*”

⁴<https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2021/12/29/ted-koppel-mayberry-cbs-sunday-morning/>

The second subsidiary narrative describes what came next – the way that “*things went downhill.*”

The sociologist who has described this most vividly is Arlie Hochschild. In her book, *Strangers in their Own Land* she defines this sub-narrative as a “Deep Story.” As she says:

I think supporters of the Tea Party in Louisiana have a deep story, as do Bernie Sanders supporters in Berkeley, California. We all have a deep story. And it’s important to know what these are. Because so many arguments aren’t really between one set of facts and another; they’re between one deep story and another.

So the deep story I felt operating in Louisiana was this: Think of people waiting in a long line that stretches up a hill. And at the top of that is the American dream. And the people waiting in line felt like they’d worked extremely hard, sacrificed a lot, tried their best, and were waiting for something they deserved. They’ve suffered long hours, layoffs, and exposure to dangerous chemicals at work and received reduced pensions.

But this line is increasingly not moving, or moving more slowly [i.e., as the economy stalls]. Then they see people cutting ahead of them in line. Immigrants, blacks, women, refugees, public sector workers. In their view, people are cutting ahead unfairly. And then in this narrative, there is Barack Obama, to the side, the line supervisor who seems to be waving these people ahead. So the government seemed to be on the side of the people who were cutting in line and pushing the people who are in line back.⁵

It is necessary to read the full description of this “Deep Story” that Hochschild presents in her book to appreciate the subtleties and textures of this narrative and the profound, wrenching sense of unfairness that it describes. In interviews and focus groups with working class people this sense of being treated in a profoundly “unfair” way and the smoldering anger it produces is always one of the most powerful messages that emerge.

The third sub-narrative expresses the growing sense that “things are falling apart today,” that chaos is growing as an increasing number of people blatantly violate the “rules” and make a mockery of the sacrifices of those who try to follow them. There are several distinct elements within this sub-narrative.

1. Crime and Lawlessness

In many cities around the country a set of quite distinct forms of lawlessness have markedly increased. The most frightening kind of random street crime – armed robbery, home invasions and carjacking – have remained the least common but as handguns and assault rifles have proliferated other kinds of violent crimes have sharply increased and blurred former distinctions. Personal arguments between people who know each other and are rivals for a girl or who engage in drunken arguments at 3 AM when late-night clubs close increasingly erupt in gunfire that kills innocent bystanders as well as the participants. At the same time, petty theft by breaking car windows or stealing UPS packages from doorsteps have sharply increased as has trespassing and urban squatting

⁵<https://www.vox.com/2016/9/6/12803636/arlie-hochschild-strangers-land-louisiana-trump>

by homeless people and incidents of assault or threatening behavior by people who are visibly mentally ill. When reported on the local news, the clear impression that is created is of a single crime “wave” and not a collection of distinct problems. The image of “chaos” on the Mexican border and uncontrolled immigration adds an additional element to this perception and creates the powerful sense that “law and order” in general is literally breaking down.⁶

2. Inflation

Inflation produces a similar, general sense that things are “out of control” although, the specific causes of rising prices for gasoline, for food at the supermarket and for rent and new homes actually have distinct supply-side causes.⁷ But for ordinary people rising prices have a distinct psychological character. They are psychologically experienced as a form of theft. Stagnant wages and wage increases are felt to be legitimately “earned” while rising prices are felt to literally be a kind of “robbery” depriving people of their hard earned income.

These problems, combined with deteriorating physical infrastructure and municipal services in many working class neighborhoods and a declining number of “good” working class jobs for working people’s children combine to create a sense of increasing social chaos and declining social order.

The three sub-narratives above confirm and reinforce each other. They form a coherent historical story of a society that once was fair to working people but has gradually become deeply unfair to those who “work hard” and “play by the rules.” There is a profound and grinding sense of unfairness and betrayal that can be read again and again in literally dozens of studies by sociologists and anthropologists who have lived and worked with working people over the years.⁸

It is this profoundly deep well of frustration, anger and resentment that GOP extremists have tapped into and weaponized against Democrats who very often respond in a profoundly tone deaf way with a long list of programs and policies they support or, even worse, with the notion that working class people really have no legitimate grievances; that, on the contrary, they are the beneficiaries of “white privilege” and are the oppressors rather than the oppressed. Many college educated Democrats no longer perceive the Democratic ethos as being the defense of “ordinary men and women” and they make this view clear in their dealings with working class voters.

Indeed, even Democratic candidates who have authentic roots in working class communities and a long record of meaningful legislative action on their behalf often fail to adequately reflect the importance of the three sub-narratives in working class political opinion.

The current campaigns of Tim Ryan and J.D. Vance for Ohio senate provide a clear example.

⁶The rioting which occurred in several cities after incidents of police brutality added a distinctly partisan element to this perception as Republicans accused Democrats of sympathizing with the rioters. In reality, significant rioting only occurred in a very few cities but news reports made it appear to be a widespread national phenomenon.

⁷If it were possible to accurately distinguish the specific inflationary effects of the Covid epidemic and now the war in the Ukraine on global supply chains, patterns of demand for foreign goods and on food and raw materials costs the remaining inflation due separately to government policy would be very substantially lower.

⁸An extensive list of ethnographic studies of working class Americans can be found in appendix 2 of *The White Working Class Today* by Andrew Levison.

Tim Ryan vs. J.D. Vance

The press is now foregrounding the Ohio senate race between Paul Ryan and J.D. Vance as a critical test of Democratic versus Republican political strategy for winning working class voters. The Wall Street Journal calls Ryan *“The Democrats’ most important 2022 candidate”* for this reason and argues that his candidacy *“will be a testing ground for every key question democrats face next year.”*⁹ Washington post columnist Dan Balz states that *“there will be few races that will more fully explore the issue of why Democrats have lost ground with working class voters who were once an essential part of their coalition and whether there’s a way to halt and reverse those trends.”*¹⁰

From a realistic perspective, of course, the idea that the issue and policy positions of either Ryan or Vance will actually “explain” working class voters choices is fundamentally wrong. The working class vote in Ohio and everywhere else in America in 2022 will be primarily determined by the general social and economic conditions on election day and the general image of the Democratic Party rather than by the specific issue positions of individual candidates. Only in abstract political science models do voters carefully compare the positions of individual candidates and choose on that basis.

But it is worth looking at the differences in the issues and biographies presented by the two candidates because they clarify the larger political strategies both have chosen and the role that narratives play in their campaigns.

Here is a list of the distinct set of major issues that each candidate lists on their websites.¹¹

Tim Ryan	J.D. Vance
Cutting Workers in on the Deal	Protect Conservative Values
<i>Rebuilding Our Country</i>	<i>Restore America’s Manufacturing Base</i>
Investing in Affordable Health Care	Defend American Small Businesses
Giving Seniors a Pay Raise	Dismantle Big Tech Oligarchy
Protecting Our Natural Resources	Conserve Traditional Families
Strengthen Our National Security	End Abortion
Helping Our Students Win the Future	Solve Southern Border Crisis
Creating New Opportunity for Rural Ohio	Combat Drug and Opioid Epidemic
Ending Racial Disparities	Protect Second Amendment Rights
Keeping Ohioans Safe	Restore Sanity on COVID-19
Modernizing Our Immigration System	A Foreign Policy that Puts Americans First
Strengthening Our Democracy	Spending and Inflation
Protecting Reproductive Freedom	Election Integrity
Standing With GLBTQ+ Ohioans	

⁹<https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-ohios-tim-ryan-is-democrats-most-important-2022-candidate-11634566217>

¹⁰<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/05/07/ohio-senate-race-sundaytake/>

¹¹The campaign websites containing the issue positions and biographies of Ryan and Vance are: <https://timforoh.com/> and <https://jdvance.com/>

Both candidates promise to “rebuild” or “restore” America’s manufacturing base but beyond that major differences are apparent.

Ryan’s list of issues is basically structured around the specific concerns of the key interest groups within the Democratic coalition – Workers, Seniors, Environmentalists, Students, Rural voters, Women, People of Color and GLBT people. On “hot button” controversial issues, Ryan’s stance is carefully moderate or non-ideological – *“Strengthen Democracy,” “Modernize the Immigration System,” “Strengthen National Security.” “Keep Ohioans Safe.”*

J.D. Vance’s list of issues, on the other hand, is organized around a clear and sharply defined conservative ideological agenda – *“Protect Conservative Values, Conserve Traditional Families, Protect the Second Amendment.” “End Abortion,” “Solve the Border Crisis,” “Restore Sanity on Covid 19 Restrictions.”* Unlike Ryan, there are no carefully balanced or hedged issue positions.

The distinction becomes even more dramatic when the detailed discussion of specific issues is examined. Both candidates promise to restore America’s manufacturing base and end job export but beyond that they dramatically diverge. Across the entire range of issues, Ryan’s issue statements basically say *“If you elect me, here’s what I’ll do for you.”* On each issue the format is basically *“Ryan understands your problems and has worked and will work in Congress to solve them.”*

For example, Ryan’s platform includes the following:

Investing in Affordable Health Care

Tim is committed to bringing down health care costs and giving Ohioans more options for how they get the care they need...Tim supports expanding Medicare by lowering the eligibility age to 60 and allowing people to buy into the program at 50, along with creating a public option that will increase competition and bring down costs. He also supports allowing Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices, Every Ohioan should be able to get the care that’s right for them... Tim proudly supports the *Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act* .He was the lead Democratic sponsor of the landmark bipartisan *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA)* and is now working to build on it by passing CARA 3.0.

Strengthen Our National Security

Tim has always shown up for the veterans, service members, and military families who take on the unthinkable to keep us safe. In Congress, he has worked to cut service-members and their families in on the deal by raising pay, investing in new pathways to civilian life, and expanding and modernizing the support and care systems that serve our servicemembers and veterans. ...Tim is working to close the pay gap between National Guard members, reservists, and active duty servicemembers, and to increase pay and benefits for those who serve our country. He voted to extend GI Bill benefits to those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and helped pass the biggest military pay increase in years and the biggest increase in VA funding in history...

In sharp contrast, J.D. Vance’s specific issue positions all basically say: *“Here’s how I’ll fight the evil left-wing assault on America.”*

Protect Conservative Values

The Left has decided to wage a culture war against traditional values. People get fired for saying things that were commonsense 10 years ago. They take hundreds of billions of American tax dollars and send it to universities that teach that America is an evil, racist nation, which is all critical race theory (CRT) is. Those universities then train teachers who bring that indoctrination into our elementary and high schools.

It's time for us to fight back. Not a single additional dollar for universities—in Ohio or out—that teach critical race theory or radical gender ideology. We need to force our schools to give an honest, patriotic account of American history. And we must give parents resources to control their kids' education—whether they choose a traditional public school, a charter school, a religious school, or a home school.

End Abortion

I am 100 percent pro-life, and believe that abortion has turned our society into a place where we see children as an inconvenience to be thrown away rather than a blessing to be nurtured

Solve Southern Border Crisis

Unchecked, illegal immigrants are entering our country at record rates. Joe Biden's do-nothing policies give millions of aliens a free pass to break our laws, traffic drugs into our communities, contribute to rising crime and take jobs away from hardworking Americans. Biden's policies have created a crisis out of thin air, after four years of President Trump's successful efforts to get our border under control. As Ohio's next senator, I will oppose every attempt by the Democrats to grant amnesty,..I'll also work to finish construction of a border wall and double the number of border agents in our country.

It is notable that Ryan's different issue positions are not structured into a coherent narrative while Vance's are. This becomes even clearer when the two candidates' biographies are compared.

Ryan:

A lifelong Ohioan who lives just a few miles from the house where he grew up in Niles, Tim has spent his career fighting for Ohio workers. ...And he understands that there's nothing more patriotic than investing in our team, bringing good-paying jobs to Ohio, and making sure our workers can compete with countries around the world – and win.

In Congress, Tim has fought for working families in his district and across the country – opposing unfair trade deals that would ship jobs overseas, pushing to raise wages, and working to protect the promise of a secure retirement by strengthening Medicare and Social Security.

He has taken on the challenges facing Ohio communities, working across the aisle to combat the Opioid crisis, and investing in clean water infrastructure for Lake Erie. He's also worked hand-in-hand with businesses to revitalize American manufacturing and bring good-paying jobs and opportunities home to Ohio.

In the Senate, Tim will fight to raise wages, make healthcare more affordable, invest in education, rebuild our public infrastructure, and revitalize manufacturing so we can make things in Ohio again.

Vance:

Ohio needs a true conservative in the U.S. Senate. It needs someone who understands how our economic and government leaders conspire to make life harder for normal Americans. It needs someone who knows what it's like to live in a left-behind community. It needs someone who is not a career politician, recycling cheap establishment talking points instead of focusing on our real problems.

A conservative outsider. That outsider is JD Vance.

American Decline Was a Choice

My hometown of Middletown, Ohio is full of great people, and it has one of the highest citizenship rates in the country—nearly every person who lives there is a US citizen. Yet it has a poverty rate 15 percent higher than the national average. In many of our biggest cities, even right here in Ohio, drive around and you'll see homeless encampments and trash strewn everywhere. Crime has skyrocketed, and even many successful families find it harder to get ahead. Every day, we read about a new assault on our country: from the Chinese who are stealing from American industry, or from our own "leaders" who teach our kids to hate their own country. Why is this happening? For a simple reason: our leaders have failed.

They chose to flood our country with criminals and drugs. They chose to take a knee as radicals ransacked our cities and made our communities less safe. They chose to make a quick buck by selling our industrial base to China. They chose censorship over the First Amendment.

Our parents and grandparents gave us the most prosperous nation in the world, and our leaders have chosen decline and plunder. But under our Constitution, We the People have the power, and it's time we used it to fight back.

The difference is dramatic. Ryan frames his candidacy as that of a "home town" politician who has worked in the community for years and is sincerely trying to help the working class voters in his district. Vance's biography is framed as the portrait of a warrior in the "war against liberals."

But what is particularly clear is that Vance is emphatically embracing the three sub-narratives as central to his campaign while Ryan frames his campaign as a traditional Democratic progressive.

The result is ironic. Ryan has a long record of public service and legislative accomplishment on behalf of workers while Vance's post university career was in the financial industry where he formed a relationship with a right wing libertarian billionaire who is financing his campaign. By any of the traditional standards of political campaigning Vance should be profoundly vulnerable as an elitist outsider and Ryan a clear favorite for re-election.

But it is not only the current economy and the damaged reputation of the Democratic Party that is allowing Vance to hold the lead in the current race for Ohio Senate. It is also that his campaign has dramatically embraced a compelling set of political narratives that profoundly resonate with working class voters today.

And the key fact is that these three linked sub-narratives are not inherently extremist. They express a genuine and understandable frustration and sense of abandonment by the Democratic Party. Democratic candidates can identify with these narratives and seek ways to address the legitimate concerns without endorsing the extremist narrative that has incorporated and exploited them with such marked success.

There are many “Deep Red” legislative districts where working class voters form a strong majority. In these districts Democratic candidates should firmly and confidently combine solid progressive economic policies with also a deep and sincere identification with the three sub-narratives that are a deeply felt part of the working class experience in modern America.